

## Chapter 29

### The Results of the First Five-Year Plan

#### Joseph Stalin

Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), the son of a shoemaker from the Russian province of Georgia, was a candidate for the priesthood before he abandoned Christianity for Marxism and became a follower of Lenin in 1903. In 1917 he was named Bolshevik party secretary, an office he retained after the revolution. Following Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin fought a successful battle for party control with Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), the leader of the Red Army during the civil war and Lenin's heir apparent. Shortly after taking power in 1928, Stalin launched a bold restructuring of the Soviet economy.

In 1928 the New Economic Policy (NEP), which Lenin adopted in 1921, still guided Soviet economic life. Through the NEP, Lenin had sought to restore agriculture and industry after seven years of war, revolution, and civil strife. Although the state maintained control of banks, foreign trade, and heavy industry, peasants could sell their goods on the open market, and small businessmen could hire labor, operate small factories, and keep their profits. The NEP saved the Soviet Union from economic collapse, but its sanction of private profit and economic competition troubled Marxist purists, and it did little to foster rapid industrialization. Thus in 1928 Stalin abandoned the NEP and replaced it with the first Five-Year Plan, which established a centralized planned economy in which Moscow bureaucrats regulated agriculture, manufacturing, finance, and transportation. In agriculture, the plan abolished individual peasant holdings and combined them into large collectives and state farms. This meant the obliteration of the class of prosperous and successful peasant farmers known as kulaks. In manufacturing, the plan emphasized heavy industry and the production of goods such as tractors, trucks, and machinery. Second and third Five-Year Plans were launched in 1933 and 1938.

In the following report, delivered to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in January 1933, Stalin outlined the goals and achievements of the first Five-Year Plan.

#### Questions for Analysis:

1. What were the overriding reasons, according to Stalin, for adopting the Five-Year Plan? Does socialist theory or the defense of the Soviet Union seem more important to him?
2. Why, in the industrial area, was it necessary to concentrate on heavy industry?
3. According to Stalin, why was the collectivization of agriculture such a key component of the Five-Year Plan?
4. What were the main obstacles to the success of the Five-Year Plan, according to Stalin?
5. In Stalin's view, how have the people of the Soviet Union benefited from the Five-Year Plan? What sacrifices have they been asked to make?
6. How, according to Stalin, does the success of the Five-Year Plan prove that communism is superior to capitalism?

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The fundamental task of the Five-Year Plan was to convert the U.S.S.R. from an agrarian and weak country, dependent upon the caprices of the capitalist countries, into an industrial and powerful country, fully self-reliant and independent of the caprices of world capitalism.

The fundamental task of the Five-Year Plan was, in converting the USSR into an industrial country, fully to eliminate the capitalist elements, to widen the front of socialist forms of economy, and to create the economic base for the abolition of classes in the USSR, for the construction of socialist society.

1 The fundamental task of the Five-Year Plan was to create such an industry in our country as  
2 would be able to re-equip and reorganize, not only the whole of industry, but also transport and  
3 agriculture – on the basis of socialism.

4 The fundamental task of the Five-Year Plan was to transfer small and scattered agriculture to the  
5 lines of large-scale collective farming, so as to ensure the economic base for socialism in the rural  
6 districts and thus to eliminate the possibility of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR.

7 Finally, the task of the Five-Year Plan was to create in the country all the necessary technical and  
8 economic prerequisites for increasing to the utmost the defensive capacity of the country, to enable it to  
9 organize determined resistance to any and every attempt at military intervention from outside.... But the  
10 execution of such a grand plan cannot be started haphazardly, just anywhere. In order to carry out such a  
11 plan it is necessary first of all to find its main link; for only after this main link has been found and  
12 grasped can all the other links of the plan be raised....

13 The main link in the Five-Year Plan was heavy industry, with machine building at its core. For  
14 only heavy industry is capable of reconstructing industry as a whole, as well as the transport system and  
15 agriculture, and of putting them on their feet.... Hence, the restoration of heavy industry had to be made  
16 on the basis of the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan.

17 But the restoration and development of heavy industry, particularly in such a backward and poor  
18 country as our country was at the beginning of the Five-Year Plan period, is an extremely difficult task;  
19 for, as is well known, heavy industry calls for enormous financial expenditures and the availability of a  
20 certain minimum of experienced technical forces, without which, speaking generally, the restoration of  
21 heavy industry is impossible. Did the party know this, and did it take this into consideration? Yes, it  
22 did.... The party declared frankly that this would call for serious sacrifices, and that we must openly and  
23 consciously make these sacrifices if we wanted to achieve our goal....

24 The facts have proved that without this boldness and this confidence in the forces of the working  
25 class the part could not have achieved the victory of which we are now so justly proud.

26  
27  
28 What are the results of the Five-Year Plan in four years in the sphere of industry?....

29 We did not have an iron and steel industry, the foundation for the industrialization of the country.  
30 Now we have this industry.

31 We did not have a tractor industry. Now we have one.

32 We did not have an automobile industry. Now we have one.

33 We did not have a machine-tool industry. Now we have one.

34 We did not have a big and up-to-date chemical industry. Now we have one.

35 We did not have a real and big industry for the production of modern agricultural machinery.  
36 Now we have one.

37 In output of electric power we were last on the list. Now we rank among the first.

38 In the output of oil products and coal we were last on the list. Now we rank among the first...

39 And as a result of all this the capitalist elements have been completely and irrevocably eliminated  
40 from industry, and socialist industry has become the sole form of industry in the USSR.

41 And as a result of all this our country has been converted from an agrarian into an industrial  
42 country; for the proportion of industrial output, as compared with agricultural output, has risen from 48  
43 per cent of the total in the beginning of the Five-Year Plan period (1928) to 70 per cent at the end of the  
44 fourth year of the Five-Year Plan period (1932)....

45 Finally, as a result of all this the Soviet Union has been converted from a weak country,  
46 unprepared for defense, into a country mighty in defense, a country prepared for every contingency, a  
47 country capable of producing on a mass scale all modern weapons of defense and of equipping its army  
48 with them in the event of an attack from without....

1 We are told: This is all very well; but it would have been far better to have abandoned the policy  
2 of industrialization,...and to have produced more cotton, cloth, shoes, clothing, and other articles of  
3 general use. The output of articles of general use has been smaller than is required, and this created  
4 certain difficulties.

5 But, then, we must know and take into account where such a policy of relegating the task of  
6 industrialization to the background would have led us. Of course, out of the 1,500,000,000 rubles in  
7 foreign currency that we spent on purchasing equipment for our heavy industries, we could have set apart  
8 a half for the purpose of importing raw cotton, hides, wool, rubber, etc. Then we would now have more  
9 cotton cloth, shoes, and clothing. But we would not have a tractor industry or an automobile industry; we  
10 would not have anything like a big iron and steel industry; we would not have metal for the manufacture  
11 of machinery – and we would be unarmed, while we are surrounded by capitalist countries which are  
12 armed with modern technique... Our position would be more or less analogous to the present position of  
13 China, which has no heavy industry and no war industry of her own and which is pecked at by everybody  
14 who cares to do so....

15  
16 The Five-Year Plan in the sphere of agriculture was a Five-Year Plan of collectivization. What  
17 did the party proceed from in carrying out collectivization?

18 The party proceeded from the fact that in order to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat  
19 and to build up socialist society it was necessary, in addition to industrialization, to pass from small,  
20 individual peasant farming to large-scale collective agriculture equipped with tractors and modern  
21 agricultural machinery, as the only firm basis for the Soviet power in the rural districts.

22 The party proceeded from the fact that without collectivization it would be impossible to lead our  
23 country onto the highroad of building the economic foundations of socialism, impossible to free the vast  
24 masses of the laboring peasantry from poverty and ignorance....

25 The party has succeeded, in a matter of three years, in organizing more than 200,000 collective  
26 farms and about 5,000 state farms specializing mainly in grain growing and livestock raising, and at the  
27 same time it has succeeded, in the course of four years, in enlarging the crop area by 21,000,000  
28 hectares.<sup>1</sup>

29 The party has succeeded in getting more than 60 per cent of the peasant farms, which account for  
30 more than 70 per cent of the land cultivated by peasants, to unite into collective farms, which means that  
31 we have *fulfilled* the Five-Year Plan *threefold*.

32 The party has succeeded in creating the possibility of obtaining, not 500,000,000 to 600,000,000  
33 poods<sup>2</sup> of marketable grain, which was the amount purchased in the period when individual peasant  
34 farming predominated, but 1,200,000,000 to 1,400,000,000 poods of grain annually.

35 The party has succeeded in routing the kulaks as a class, although they have not yet been dealt the  
36 final blow; the laboring peasants have been emancipated from kulak bondage and exploitation, and a firm  
37 economic basis for the Soviet government, the basis of collective farming, has been established in the  
38 countryside.

39 The party has succeeded in converting the USSR from a land of small peasant farming into a land  
40 where agriculture is run on the largest scale in the world....

41 Do not all these facts testify to the superiority of the Soviet system of agriculture over the  
42 capitalist system? Do not these facts go to show that the collective farms are a more virile form of  
43 farming than individual capitalist farms?....

44 In putting into effect the Five-Year Plan for agriculture, the party pursued a policy of  
45 collectivization at an accelerated tempo. Was the party right in pursuing the policy of an accelerated  
46 tempo of collectivization? Yes, it was absolutely right, even though certain excesses were committed in

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<sup>1</sup> In the metric system, a *hectare* is slightly less than 2.5 acres.

<sup>2</sup> A *pood* is a Russian measure of weight equal to about thirty-six pounds.

1 the process.<sup>3</sup> In pursuing the policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class, and in destroying the kulak nests,  
2 the party could not stop half way. It was necessary to carry this work to completion....

3  
4 What are the results of these successes as regards the improvement of the material conditions of  
5 the workers and peasants?....

6 In our country, in the USSR, the workers have long forgotten unemployment. Some three years  
7 ago we had about one and a half million unemployed. It is already two years now since unemployment  
8 has been completely abolished. And in these two years the workers have already forgotten about the  
9 unemployment, about its burden and its horrors. Look at the capitalist countries: what horrors are taking  
10 place there as a result of unemployment! There are now no less than thirty to forty million unemployed in  
11 those countries....

12 Every day they try to get work, seek work, are prepared to accept almost any conditions of work,  
13 but they are not given work, because they are “superfluous.” And this is taking place at a time when vast  
14 quantities of goods and products are wasted to satisfy the caprices of the darlings of fate, the scions of  
15 capitalists and landlords. The unemployed are refused food because they have no money to pay for the  
16 food; they are refused shelter because they have no money to pay rent. How and where do they live? They  
17 live on the miserable crumbs from the rich man’s table; by raking refuse cans, where they find decayed  
18 scraps of food; they live in the slums of big cities, and more often in hovels outside of the towns, hastily  
19 put up by the unemployed out of packing cases and the bark of trees....

20 One of the principal achievements of the Five-Year Plan in four years is that we have abolished  
21 unemployment and have relieved the workers of the USSR of its horrors.

22 The same thing must be said in regard to the peasants. They, too, have forgotten about the  
23 differentiation of the peasants into kulaks and poor peasants, about the exploitation of the poor peasants  
24 by the kulaks, about the ruin which, every year, caused hundreds of thousands and millions of poor  
25 peasants to go begging....

26 [The Five-Year Plan] has undermined and smashed the kulaks as a class, thus liberating the poor  
27 peasants and a good half of the middle peasants from bondage to the kulaks.... It has thus eliminated the  
28 possibility of the differentiation of the peasantry into exploiters – kulaks – and exploited – the poor  
29 peasants. It has raised the poor peasants and the lower stratum of the middle peasants to a [position of  
30 security in the collective farms, and has thereby put a stop to the process of ruination and impoverishment  
31 of the peasantry....

32 Now there are no more cases of hundreds of thousands and millions of peasants being ruined and  
33 forced to hang around the gates of factories and mills. That is what used to happen; but that was long ago.  
34 Now the peasant is in a position of security; he is a member of a collective farm which has at its disposal  
35 tractors, agricultural machinery, a seed fund, a reserve fund, etc., etc.

36 Such are the main results of the realization of the Five-Year Plan in industry and agriculture; in  
37 the improvement of the conditions of life of the working people and the development of the exchange of  
38 goods; in the consolidation of the Soviet power and the development of the class struggle against the  
39 remnants and survival of the dying classes.

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<sup>3</sup> Stalin is understating the case more than a little. In fact, several million kulaks were executed or deported to Siberia because of their opposition to collectivization.